

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES



NEWS RELEASE

Cora J. Campbell, Commissioner
Jeff R. Regnart, Director



Contact:

Jeremy Botz, Gillnet Area Management Biologist
Tommy Sheridan, Seine Area Management Biologist
Amanda Wiese, Asst. Area Management Biologist
Phone: (907) 424-3212 Fax: (907) 424-3235

Prince William Sound Area Office
401 Railroad Avenue, PO Box 669
Cordova, AK 99574-0669
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Prince William Sound Salmon Fishery News Release #63

COPPER RIVER DISTRICT: The Copper River District will open at 7:00 am for a 24-hour commercial fishing period on Thursday, August 29. For coho salmon management, the Copper River District is anticipated to be on a 1-2 period a week schedule dependent upon escapement and harvest trends. For the week ending August 31, the actual Copper River Delta survey index count was 19,015 coho salmon versus an anticipated range of 9,298–19,468 coho salmon. The next aerial survey is anticipated to be flown early next week. The preliminary harvest estimate for the fishing period that closed Tuesday, August 27 was 24,400 coho salmon with 282 deliveries reported.

The Copper River District is open to subsistence fishing concurrent with commercial fishing periods until closed at the end of the season. Subsistence permits may be obtained during regular business hours. The Cordova ADF&G office is open to the public Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm. **Subsistence permits are not available outside of regular office hours.**

BERING RIVER DISTRICT: The Bering River District will remain closed to commercial salmon fishing. For coho salmon management, the Bering River District is anticipated to be on a 1-2 period a week schedule dependent upon escapement and harvest trends. For the week ending August 31, the actual Bering River District survey index count was 6,730 coho salmon versus an anticipated range of 4,002–10,158 coho salmon. The next aerial survey is anticipated to be flown early next week. The preliminary harvest estimate for the fishing period that closed Tuesday, August 27 was 5,300 coho salmon with 47 deliveries reported.

ESHAMY DISTRICT: The Eshamy District will open to commercial gillnet fishing for a 14-hour period starting at 8:00 am on Thursday, August 29. The MBH AGZ will open to DRIFT GILLNET permit holders only during the period occurring on Thursday, August 29. No harvest was reported for the period that closed Monday, August 26. Cumulative harvest through August 26 was 508,000 sockeye, 213,000 chum, 1,600 coho, and 63,900 pink salmon. Video monitoring of salmon escapement on the Eshamy River is currently operational. The estimated sockeye salmon passage into Eshamy Lake from August 4 through August 15 was a minimum of 2,300 fish. Sockeye salmon passage from August 16 through August 23 is currently being analyzed and will soon be available. Future openings will depend on assessment of sockeye salmon run entry into Eshamy River.

SEINE FISHERIES: PWSAC completed their pink salmon cost recovery program on July 31. PWSAC began their eggtake operations at WNH, AFK, and CCH on August 20, August 21, and August 24, respectively. Through August 27, PWSAC reports eggtake progress of 37% towards the final goal at WNH, 31% complete at AFK, and 5% complete at CCH. Incorporating recent fecundity data and preseason assumptions as outlined in the PWSAC Annual Management Plans, it is anticipated that PWSAC could need **at least** an additional 215,000 pink salmon to reach AFK's eggtake goals, 340,000 fish at CCH, and 211,000 fish at WNH. On August 28, PWSAC reports hatchery escapement (including fishway, barrier net, HEEZ, outside of HEEZ estimates) of 335,000 pink salmon at AFK, 615,000 at CCH, and 291,000 at WNH.

Recent pink salmon harvest estimates for Prince William Sound CPFs include approximately 294,000 fish on August 25, 127,000 on August 26, and 97,900 on August 27. Cumulative pink salmon harvest totals for Prince William Sound **through August 27** include approximately 1.8 million VFDA cost recovery fish, 1.7 million PWSAC cost recovery fish, and an estimated 85.7 million CPF fish. It is believed that there were fewer than 15 permit holders participating in the August 27 fishery.

EASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Eastern District, south of a line from Entrance Point to Potato Point, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 15-hour periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 9:00 pm on Thursday, August 29 and Friday, August 30. The next commercial fishing opportunity in Port Valdez may occur starting on Tuesday, September

3, dependent on surplus coho salmon escapement at SGH. Pink salmon harvest estimates for the August 25 through August 27 Eastern District CPFs are confidential.

NORTHERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northern District, **excluding the CCH SHA and THA**, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 15-hour periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 9:00 pm on Thursday, August 29 and Friday, August 30. Time and area for future fishing opportunity in hatchery subdistricts will be dependent upon eggtake progress, and escapement at CCH. Pink salmon harvest estimates for the August 25 Northern District CPF include 42,300 pink salmon with 13 deliveries reported. Pink salmon harvest estimates for the August 26 and August 27 Eastern District CPFs are confidential.

COGHILL DISTRICT: Waters of the Coghill District, **excluding waters of the WNH HEEZ**, will open to commercial DRIFT GILLNET and PURSE SEINE fishing for 15-hour periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 9:00 pm on Thursday, August 29 and Friday, August 30. The WNH HEEZ consists of the waters of the SHA north of a latitude line at 60° 47.78' N. Time and area for future fishing opportunity in hatchery subdistricts will be dependent upon eggtake progress, and escapement at WNH. Harvest estimates for recent Coghill District CPFs include 5,170 coho and 134,000 pink salmon on August 25; 5,370 coho and 70,500 pink salmon on August 26; and, 2,140 coho and 16,400 pink salmon on August 27. There were 28 purse seine and 152 gillnet deliveries reported for these periods.

NORTHWESTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Northwestern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 15-hour periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 9:00 pm on Thursday, August 29 and Friday, August 30. There were no harvests reported for the August 25 through August 27 Northwestern District CPFs.

SOUTHWESTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southwestern District, **excluding waters of the AFK Outer HEEZ**, will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 15-hour periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 9:00 pm on Thursday, August 29 and Friday, August 30. The AFK Outer HEEZ consists of the waters of the AFK SHA west and south of a line from 60° 03.398' N. lat., 148° 03.326' W. long. to 60° 03.017' N. lat., 148° 02.547' W. long. Time and area for future fishing opportunity in hatchery subdistricts will be dependent upon eggtake progress, and escapement at AFK. Pink salmon harvest estimates for recent Southwestern District CPFs include 114,000 on August 25 with 24 deliveries; 52,500 on August 26, with 8 deliveries; and, 62,800 on August 27, with 7 deliveries.

MONTAGUE DISTRICT: Waters of the Montague District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 15-hour periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 9:00 pm on Thursday, August 29 and Friday, August 30. There were no harvests reported for the August 25 through August 27 Montague District CPFs.

SOUTHEASTERN DISTRICT: Waters of the Southeastern District will open to commercial purse seine fishing for 15-hour periods beginning at 6:00 am and ending at 9:00 pm on Thursday, August 29 and Friday, August 30. There were no harvests reported for the August 25 through August 27 Southeastern District CPFs.

The next scheduled salmon fisheries announcement is anticipated to occur by 2:00 pm Friday, August 30.

Permit holders are advised that unscheduled announcements based on current escapement data may occur at any time inseason either establishing an additional period or extending an open period.

Announcement recordings are available for **gillnet fisheries at 907-424-7535 and seine fisheries at 907-424-7345. In addition, announcement recordings are available in Anchorage at 267-2843.**

Additionally, announcements, inseason harvest data, and escapement data are available at the following web addresses:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareacopperriver.main> (Copper River homepage) or

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareapws.main> (Prince William Sound homepage).

Unless otherwise specified, all openings are clock openings based on Alaska Daylight Time, which is based on Coordinated Universal Time and may be obtained by calling 303-499-7111.

The department encourages commercial permit holders to renew their licenses early and to check their CFEC vessel registration stickers to make sure that they are current.

The department also encourages permit holders to report observed violations to Wildlife Safeguard at 800-478-3377. Reports are anonymous and cash rewards may be paid for successful prosecution of violations.

PWS commercial fishers are reminded that area fisheries often necessitate fishing in close proximity to marine mammals. Under the Marine Mammals Protection Act (MMPA), the PWS drift gillnet fishery is classified as a Category II fishery. Participants in Category I and II fisheries must be registered in the Marine Mammal Avoidance Program (MMAP) to be authorized for lawful incidental, but not intentional, marine mammal takes during fishing. However, this authorization explicitly does **not** exempt holders of commercial fishing permits from the MMPA prohibition on takes of marine mammals

listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. As a participant in the PWS drift gillnet fishery you are automatically registered in the Marine Mammal Authorization Program (MMAP) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). As a participant in a Category II fishery, you must:

- Maintain an MMAP Authorization Certificate, or a photocopy, on board the vessel while engaging in any of the fisheries identified on the reverse side of the certificate. For non-vessel or set net fisheries, the enclosed Certificate, or a photocopy, must be in the possession of the permit holder during fishing operations. This Certificate, in combination with a current, valid state or Federal fishing permit, will serve as your authorization to incidentally take non-endangered or non-threatened marine mammals in the course of commercial fishing operations.
- Report all injuries and mortalities of marine mammals within 48 hours of returning from the trip during which these takes occurred using the MMAP Mortality/Injury Reporting Form (visit http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/interactions/mmap_reporting_form.pdf for a copy).
- If so requested, take an observer aboard your vessel.

Purse seine and set gillnet gear are classified as a category III fisheries under the MMPA. Category III fishery participants are automatically exempted from the incidental take prohibition in the MMPA. Therefore, you do not need to maintain the MMAP certificate aboard your vessel, but must report any incidental takes of marine mammals within 48 hours of the incident or your return to port. Such reports must be made on the Marine Mammals Authorization Program Mortality/Injury Reporting Form.

Because some marine mammals are also listed under the Endangered Species Act, incidental takes are also regulated under that act and are not authorized.

All MMPA category fisheries are liable for incidentally taking ESA listed species.

Please reference http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/pdfs/esa_factsheet.pdf for a list of marine mammals currently listed under the ESA (you should periodically check with the National Marine Fisheries Service for any changes in listed species). Under the ESA, take means to “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.” 16U.S.C. 1532(19); and harass means an “intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to the wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” (50 C.F.R. 17.3).

To reduce the possibility of incidentally taking an ESA listed species and its associated liability ADF&G recommends that:

- Fishermen participating in area fisheries remain vigilant in monitoring gear when marine mammals may be present.
- Fishermen use avoidance measures (e.g., not fishing or relocating fishing activities when marine mammals are present or likely to be present) to minimize interactions with marine mammals.
- Avoid fishing in areas where marine mammals are likely to be present at night or when visibility or weather conditions make it difficult to spot marine mammals.

For further questions concerning marine mammal regulations call NMFS at 907-271-5006.